

Drug-Induced Deaths

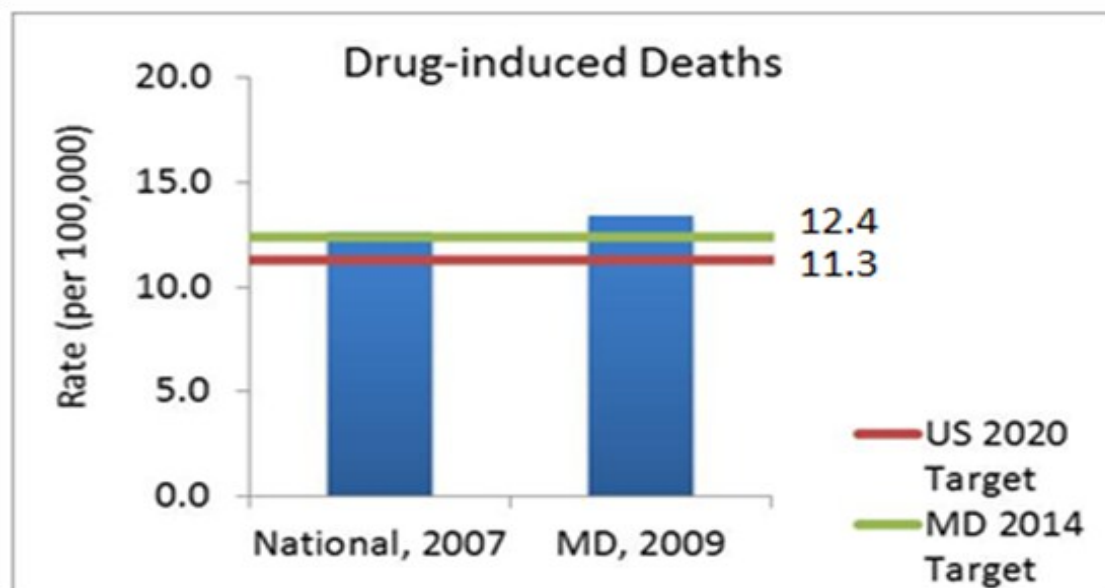
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WHO IS AT RISK?

Children Whether it's to treat a fever, asthma, allergies or to manage diabetes, your child may need to take an OTC or prescription medicine. While they can help your little one feel better, medicines can also be harmful if they're not used properly. Accidental ingestion of medicines by young children account for a large percentage of visits to emergency departments each year.

Pregnant or Nursing Mothers If you or someone you know is pregnant or nursing, it's important to consult a doctor before using OTC or prescription medicines.

Older Adults Most older Americans live with one or more chronic conditions, such as arthritis, diabetes, high blood pressure or heart disease. If you care for an aging parent with one of these conditions, you know it can mean taking medicines on a regular basis.



Source: National Vital Statistics System. 2007; Maryland Vital Statistics Administration 2009

Misuse of Prescription Medications on the Rise

The use of illegal drugs has been a public policy concern for decades. Recently, the improper use of prescription medications has reached epidemic levels. In 2010, about 12 million Americans, age 12 or older reported nonmedical use of prescription medications in the past year. The number of overdose deaths from prescription drugs is now greater than those of deaths from heroin and cocaine combined. A large part of the problem is the use of pain-killers without a prescription, or misusing a prescribed drug to get "high." Improving the way prescription painkillers are prescribed can reduce the number of people who misuse, abuse or overdose from these powerful drugs, while making sure patients have access to safe, effective treatment. In 2011, legislation to create a Prescription Drug Monitoring Program was passed in Maryland to make comprehensive information on prescribed and dispensed Controlled Dangerous Substances available to doctors, pharmacists and other healthcare providers.

WHAT CARETAKERS NEED TO KNOW

Keep a Family Medical Record

Keeping track of each family member's medicines can help protect them from harm. So, get organized to stay on top of your family's medicine use and adopt habits that promote safe medicine use.

Make Notes and Take Notes

Use the "Make Notes & Take Notes" worksheet available by "Educate Before You Medicate" before, during, and after each doctor's visit. Find the worksheet at http://www.learnaboutrxsafety.org/pdf/must_make_notes_color.pdf

3 R's FOR SAFE MEDICATION USE

1. All medicines, prescription and non-prescription, have **RISKS** as well as benefits. You need to weigh these risks and benefits carefully for every medicine you take
2. **RESPECT** the power of your medicine and the value of medicines properly used
3. Take **RESPONSIBILITY** for learning about how to take your medication safely.

Older Adults
account for
13%
of the population
but
34%
of all Prescription
Medication Use

SHIP RESOURCES

MUST for Seniors <http://www.mustforseniors.org/index.jsp>

Medicine Safety <http://www.learnaboutrxsafety.org/>

Educate Before You Medicate <http://www.talkaboutrx.org/index.jsp>

Children and Prescriptions <http://www.acep.org/content.aspx?id=41706&terms=drug%20abuse>

Maryland's Prescription Drug Monitoring Program <http://maryland-adaa.org/FAQsPDMP.html>

Prescription Drug Abuse in Maryland <http://www.oag.state.md.us/Reports/PrescriptionDrugAbuse.pdf>

ELDERLY

Physical changes can complicate medicine use. Reduced liver and kidney function in older patients affects the way a drug is broken down and removed from the body. This means medicines may stay in the body longer, sometimes causing more severe side effects.

Memory problems make it more difficult to manage medicines. Not being able to remember when and how to take multiple medicines can also cause problems. There are many different types of memory aids that can be used by older adults to help them remember to take their medicines.

Some medicines should be avoided. Research published in the *Archives of Internal Medicine* in 2004 found that one in five older patients is prescribed what is considered to be a harmful medicine in this population. There are a number of drugs that are best avoided in older patients.